

Konrad Schmid, *The Old Testament: A Literary History* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011).

Part F- The Literature of the Ptolemaic Period (Third Century BCE)

The adding on of layers to the already existing Biblical literature and the supplementation of texts theologically continued in the Ptolemaic period.

So, for instance,

... the wisdom theology of Proverbs 1-9 can be easily understood against the background of the Isis theology that was powerfully propagated by the Ptolemies (p. 186).

And

Psalms 2-89 thus revitalizes the original function of the individual songs of lament from the pre-exilic period as royal texts (p. 192).

Thus the Ptolemaic era was, like the previous eras, characterized by adaptation and clarification of theological themes and issues.

On pages 193-194 Schmid offers a short excursus on the rise of Apocalypticism. It is a very brief (1.33 page) overview on the subject which is nonetheless important and useful, particularly for students just being introduced to biblical studies.

Narrative materials alongside wisdom texts and psalms also saw expansion in the Ptolemaic period and Schmid's parade example is the development of the Balaam pericope- especially Num 24:23-24, of which he remarks

Probably these insertions were motivated by the effort- catalyzed by the cultural contest with Hellenism – to see the decisive events in world history already anchored in the Torah through prophecy (p. 198).

Schmid also spends a bit of time discussing the translation of the Torah into Greek.

Most interestingly though when he turns his attention to the prophetic corpus, he observes

The experience of the collapse of the two-hundred-year world rule of the Persians perhaps left its clearest literary evidence in the prophetic books. We can see in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the Twelve Prophets how the idea of an

all-encompassing cosmic judgment of the world was developed by means of a continuation of existing texts on judgment (of the nations) (p. 200).

Other texts arose as well which, according to Schmid, challenged the priestly texts:

... within the framework of the world-judgment texts in the corpus propheticum, especially Isaiah 24-27, there are passages that openly oppose the theology of the Priestly document. This can be seen with particular clarity in Isa 24:4-6...

Schmid concludes – later along in the chapter – that

... the prophetic books were essentially complete before the Maccabees ... (p. 207).

Certainly.

Next, the Seleucid period. Again, I heartily commend this volume to interested readers. It's just simply brilliant.

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